



JOHN BROWN . . . the man

FRSH, ACSW, AGPA



Source: [John Brown \(archive.org\)](#)

Anyone directly associated with John Brown is astonished at the richness of his experience and even more by the extraordinary freedom and creativity with which he transforms experience into ideas and action. His sense of life is vital, not fixed. It is of process, transformation and growth. And it is this sense which should and will inform the course of Browndale in the future, as it has in all of John Brown's work in the past. It is implicit in all his teaching and he is a magnificently gifted teacher.

written by Allan King in first official statement as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Browndale INC.

Legeslative Assembly Tribute on the passing of John Brown

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):

It is a time of reflection whenever a person who has served in this assembly, for a long period of time or short, happens to pass away. John Brown did serve in the assembly from 1967 to 1971 as the member for Beaches-Woodbine for the New Democratic Party. He was a man who distinguished himself, for the most part, for his interest in the field of health and particularly mental health and children's mental health.....”

....." As a member of the Legislature, he was not one who particularly enjoyed this House. He was a person who, rather, fought many of his battles outside of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. No doubt he was a person within his own caucus who spoke out on many issues and didn't always have the unanimous support of the caucus, but he fought on for that in which he believed. Stephen Lewis, formerly of the New Democratic Party, recognized a talent early on when he was dealing with some very difficult children. John Brown was prepared to take on the job of dealing with children who had some immense problems in terms of mental health and to work with those children. In the Legislature, he was certainly very critical in the role of the opposition in the field of health care of the government of the day, from 1967 to 1971. He had a good deal of passion about mental health. I think all of us recognize that it's one of the areas in life, and indeed the life of a Legislature, where we have seen less emphasis than we would like to see. Mental health, in the total spectrum of health, has never enjoyed in any circum-stances I can remember the kind of emphasis that it should. This would have been very frustrating to John Brown because of his great concern about those youngsters. He was the executive director of Browndale Inter-national Ltd and Brown Camps, and it was an organization that dealt exclusively with troubled youth. They did not take on easy cases. Others may not have been prepared to do so; John Brown and his group were prepared to take on the most difficult. He had a revolutionary approach to children's mental health. It involved intense, 24-hour-care, compassionate treatment of children, and allowing children to express themselves. He was very hands-on in terms of the treatment provided. He took great strides both before and after his election to communicate the need for the Ministry of Health to invest in children's mental health facilities, and that cry is with us today, as it has been for a long time. Everyone is trying to respond to that. Stephen Lewis referred to him as "a dedicated rescuer of profoundly troubled children."

He was a member of the standing committee on health, the standing committee on welfare and reform, and the standing committee on social, family and correctional services. You recognize by the committees that he chose to be on because that's usually what members do; they make that request that he was very dedicated in that particular field. To members of his family and his associates, we extend our deep sympathy on his passing recently.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):

It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the official opposition to extend our sincerest sympathies to the family of John Brown, someone who served in this House for four years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was someone whom Ellie Tesher of the Toronto Star called "an outstanding social worker." Brown, according to professional colleagues, including some critics, is the man who did most to advance the cause of disturbed children in this province. On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, Bob Runciman, our leader, John Tory, and indeed the entire Conservative caucus, I would like to extend our sincerest sympathies to Mr. Brown's family.

Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):

It is indeed a privilege and an honour to speak about John Brown, who was, of course, the predecessor for many years of the old riding of Beaches-Woodbine, serving in this Legislature from 1967 to 1971. When you start to look at the old newspaper clippings and some of the stories around the Legislature, when you talk to people who were here at that time, the words to describe John Brown are quite common: He was a brilliant man, he was uncompromising, he was passionate and he was very committed, especially to children and to those who he felt had been abused by the system....."

If you look at his biography, which you can find in the legislative library, he had a bachelor of social work, a master's degree, ACSW, AGPA. He was educated at the University of Minnesota, the University of British Columbia school of social work, the University of Chicago school of social services. He was recognized in the United States, Canada and Britain for his academic background. He really came on to the stage, though, in Ontario, in 1953, when he was hired to work at Warrendale. We all know of that groundbreaking institution. In fact, there are some good quotes, again from Ellie Tesher, who I think everybody in the Legislature, or at least the three of us who spoke, had an opportunity to refer to. She wrote:" Doug Barr, director of Metro Children's Aid Society, summed up the controversy of Brown's treatment program:"Some of the best care for children and some of the worst care has been provided by Browndale. They've taken in some of the toughest kids and hung in the longest with them, with quite significant results.' "The children he sought to serve were probably the most disturbed youth of the day, and he had amazing success. Quoting again from this same article: "Brown arrived with his first wife Liz fresh from a social work degree at the University of British Columbia and early training in Windsor helping disturbed children using innovative methods of leading therapists."A former colleague says Brown arrived at a time when Ontario's ministry of social welfare was paying 'five cents a day per child.'" I think that's a little bit of hyperbole, but obviously not enough money was being spent in those days. He went on to establish Browndale and Warrendale, and the article says: "At Warrendale, Brown launched the beginning of group home therapy programs in Ontario family-like treatment units, with five children and three child care workers living in

houses on residential streets. Senior staff, like Brown himself, were 'extended family' to the youngsters." Today we take for granted that children are allowed to remain in the community and not put in institutions, and we accept as a matter of right that those children will be looked after in community settings. He was the first, he was the pioneer and he was very controversial. In 1967, Mr. Brown chose to run for this Legislature and represented the people of Beaches-Woodbine, as the riding was then known. He was a controversial figure here. He often spoke in disparaging tones to the government of the day. He was very angry and he was very unhappy, I would have to say, from what we understand of life in the Legislature. He chose not to run again in 1971 and went back to his first love; that is, looking after children.¹⁴³⁰ Of course and no one has said this he found himself in troubles in his later life. I suppose that can happen to each and every one of us. But he remains a figure that many Canadians respect and admire. Many people of Ontario remember how well he helped troubled youth, and we remember him for that. We asked for a word from one of his colleagues at the time, Rev William Ferrier, and he quoted it best:

"His friends remember him as a friendly, warm-hearted, com-passionate human being they could count on for support during tough times. He's the kind of guy you could lean on." New Democrats remember his life. We sympathize and send sympathy to his family and friends, and remember a true pioneer in Ontario.

